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POEMS BY R. C. PHILLIMORE



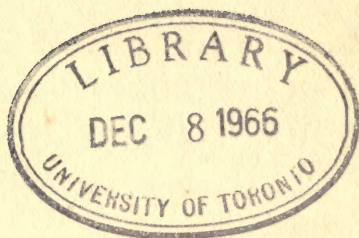


# P O E M S

BY R. C. PHILLIMORE  
WITH AN INTRODUCTION  
BY JOHN MASEFIELD

*By the grace of God I took  
From my lady's hands this book,  
And herein for my lady's sake  
Her songs I'll make.*

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## INTRODUCTION

MR. PHILLIMORE'S poems have a quality that is as rare in literature as in other things—the quality of personality or individual point of view. Men's minds, whatever their variety of type, are seldom so variously active as to be distinct in texture. Their activities tend to be confined within conventional limits, which, though they may suit the type, or even the race, are cramping to the person. It is only when the person or individual emerges, however imperfectly, from the clogging level of what is commonly thought or usually done, that the attention is aroused, the imagination set free, and a new thing added to the mind. Writers, as a class, are as subject to convention as their fellows; none but the great are free, none but the free are great. But every mark of freedom is a sign of greatness, and Mr. Phillimore at once

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makes this claim upon us—that he is not one of those who are poets as they would be tallow chandlers, merely from some fondness for smoothness, but because he has the strength to be personally alone, uttering things after his own fashion, stamped with his own mark, asking nothing more “than to enjoy Delight with Liberty,” by being himself and uttering himself. This is the rare thing in a literary age when writers are book-sodden, and this quality Mr. Phillimore has. Whether one likes or dislikes what he writes, one is conscious that it comes from the full strength of a personality, with a man’s nature behind it.

Many poets win honour with poems which express only a part, or a single desire, of their natures. In Mr. Phillimore’s lyrics one feels that the writer has been ordering to gentle measures not one but many sides of himself, many interests and delights in kinds of life both interesting and delightful, so that none of his nature might be without its music. This keeping of balance and order in vital interests, allowing none to warp the nature, but exercising



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all, gives health and strength to a man and power to a poet. Those who fit up one room with all their treasures may delight a gaudy mood, but the more chosen habitation is that mansion of the mind where many chambers are lit, swept, and habitable.

Mr. Phillimore's variety of subject makes his work companionable to many moods; and it is by considering his subjects that we can best come to a knowledge of his poetical place. Frequently a line or couplet will indicate a poet's nature as completely as a volume, and it seems to us that the living quality of Mr. Phillimore's interests is perfectly displayed in the merry poem "To All Land Children," in the lines—

"I would rather play with a conger eel,  
If only because such a beast can feel  
When I pinch his tail, than with all the flowers  
That do nothing but grow through the livelong hours."

Something alive that can act and be handled gives a flavour of life to thought, and, as Mr. Phillimore says,

"Gives just the fun  
That makes a charming companion."

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Continually throughout the book the reader finds this happiness in having life to handle made the *motif* of poem or image, as in the fine poem beginning:

“ Would you go out into the void place of death ?”

and more certainly and completely in the opening stanza of the eighth poem, where the philosophy of a life has been wittily pressed into five lines. With this sense of the happiness of possessing life there is a powerful sense of the moral use of life, in continual just endeavour towards men and work (expressed well in “ The House of Flint ” and boldly in the poem “ Content ”), and also that rebellious sense which has cried “ Escape !” in our literature, in this or that direction, for nearly a century, to show that the world’s endeavour towards men and work at the present time has failed both in achievement and in aim.

The ideal is man’s hope transfigured, and in the minds of poets it is often made the brighter by the feeling that it has gone from the world in some gradual fading of the soul. We all have glimpses of some illuminated time now gone:

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to Mr. Phillimore these glimpses come in poignant moments, when the swiftness or passion of some movement of London work-girls flinging bread to the gulls, or the fall of music played by gipsies in the wilds, suggests a grace or fire now crushed or gone from life. Other poems show him conscious of a time when there was stricter justice between master and man, and a stricter exaction of fine work, but in these poems he writes of that earlier time, suspected by scientists, but told of by the poets, when the individual was fine and ecstasy was daily bread, and the possession of that bread not, as now, a passport out of civilization, but the knowledge of the heart of life. The gipsy poems have all the charm that gipsying has for us; they give us that sense of the desire to escape which is often like a drunkenness upon the city dweller, and they are full of that respect (it is very nearly envy) which all the civilized feel for men and women who have been strong enough to give up everything in order to possess their own souls, facing the wilderness proudly with a little music and a tale or two.





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## POEMS





## 1. THE BOY'S LAMENT

I WOULD no birds were singing,  
I would no plants could grow,  
I would that everything did wear  
A solemn dress of woe.

For, ah is me ! my love is dead,  
My love is dead,  
And it makes me sorrow so.

They say that my love was lovely,  
They say that my love was fair :  
" Her face was like a picture,  
And the bonniest nut-brown hair."

But she was just my love to me,  
My love to me;  
For nothing else do I care.

Oh ! I would I could go to my true love,  
Just once her face to see ;  
For I know that nothing can make me glad,  
Can make me glad,  
But her sweet company.

And I cannot believe that my love,  
My own true love,  
Would be sorry of me.

## 2. TO ALL LAND CHILDREN

COME, dear children, come and play  
In the purple pools by the edge of the bay,  
Where the rocks are green and the seaweed red,  
And the hermit crab lies late a-bed.

Oh ! why do you play with the garden flowers  
That fade when they're picked in a few short  
hours ?

Oh ! why make a pet of a dull land rose  
That thinks stupid thoughts that nobody knows ?

When here in this pool in the slippery rocks,  
By untying the sea-wrack's knotty locks,  
You can see strange orange snails crawl by,  
And him that has the scarlet dye :

See fishes dart in the depths below,  
Old, gouty limpets walking slow,  
And the barnacles, that open their bony eyes  
To squint at the crimson anemonies.

One day, when the tide is frightfully low,  
Out to the edge of the bay we'll go,  
To look at the roses of the seas,  
The monster crassicornisses.

He cares not to grow in a garden prim,  
No gardener man looks after him,  
But neatly and well like a dandy he's dressed  
In a coat of frieze and a scarlet vest.

And as to his thoughts, they are plain to see,  
For he makes no manner of mystery,  
But with long arms waving far and wide,  
Seeks for his tea at the turn of the tide.

Unless he be cursed with a priggish mind,  
No child could a better playmate find;  
For such innocent manners give just the fun  
That makes a charming companion.

I would rather play with a conger-eel,  
If only because such a beast can feel  
When I pinch his tail, than with all the flowers  
That do nothing but grow through the livelong  
hours.

So come, dear children, come and play  
With the strange sea-beasts at the edge of the  
bay,  
And bring them meat and pieces of bread,  
That the hermit crabs may be duly fed.

### 3. THE OULAD NAIL'S INVITATION

Now that the feast is nearly over,  
Come let us leave the glamour of the street !  
For the evening has invited  
To the courtyard dimly lighted  
My unreluctant feet.

When faint from the market of the perfumes  
The scent of musk and cinnamon is blown,  
By a wind that, incense breathing,  
Through the gateway passes, wreathing  
Marble and carven stone,

I will bring you to a place where all is quiet,  
And spread before your eyes a soft divan,  
Made pleasant for your dreaming  
With silks of strangest seeming,  
And with carpets of Kerouan.



#### 4. FERNHURST

THE little hill falling in steep degrees  
Is half made bare, half hid in last year's leaves,  
By fitful gusts of summer wind, that weaves  
The broken air through scarce interstices.

Here foliage of the many-branchèd trees  
Almost across the dim horizon reaches,  
And burnished stems of elfin-haunted beeches  
Above the slope show their wind-knotted knees.

There, outlined dark, the rolling Sussex weald,  
And far-off sky through arches yellow-green,  
Depth beyond depth of deepness is revealed—  
A shadowy land, seen sunlit boughs between.

So pleasant is the place, that all are fain  
Long here to linger, gazing on the plain.

## 5. THE POET AND HIS MISTRESS

POET.

COME, love, we'll make a bargain !  
For half a ream of song  
You shall make me one small promise,  
To love me my whole life long.

MISTRESS.

When waste and rotten refuse  
For gold can bartered be,  
Then shall you sell your rubbish  
And buy one kiss from me.

6. " I AM ALWAYS ASKING MY FRIENDS  
WHETHER LIFE IS WORTH LIVING  
TO THEM "

WOULD you go out into the void place of death  
Where is no firelight flicker of a friend,  
Nor even a little candle of love to lend  
Light to the night, that nightens without end ?

Would you forget the good times you have  
known  
That make your present living seem so waste,  
Or has not one, not one fair field been sown  
In all the weary acreage of the past ?

Or are you fearing that from life's small store,  
You've stolen more than what you can repay ?  
Know there is piled upon God's granary floor  
More than you'll take away.

There were great seasons in the boundless past,  
Great frosts, great western winds and wandering  
rain;  
And God has reaped a million crops of grain,  
And Man a little tithe thereof has ta'en.

And if sometimes somewhere the store looks  
small,  
And if sometimes somewhere the light seems  
dim,  
Your thought has failed, the harvest not at all;  
Heaped with God's reapings is the world's wide  
rim.

7.

RIGHT glad should I be  
To be born in the South,  
Were I beast, or man, or tree.  
It's a hateful drive  
To keep alive  
In the bitter North Countree.



I LOVE one self, the small myself I know,  
With thinking brain and loving heart, and feet  
That wander daily down the solid street:  
A whole intent to fashion as it may  
Some other whole out of life's supple clay.

The other self I love not—that is God,  
Or rather is the elusive infinite,  
Of hopes and terrors strangely composite,  
That in his own image since the world began  
Each man has made anew, crying that God made  
man.

## 9. THE COLLECTOR'S LOVE SONG

LITTLE sweet flower, 'tis you that are  
On the lid of the ginger-jar;  
No one else could have such sweet  
Delicate hands and painted feet,  
Or so contrive to carry your fan  
As to melt the might of a metal man.

I wish I were the man who drew  
Your features on the crackled blue;  
I wish I were the painter too;  
I wish, in fact, I could divine  
How to limn that lovely line,  
Paint it, and burn it, and make it mine—  
Make, in fact, the thing called You.

All my life I would repeat  
Just those hands and painted feet,  
And give you just a yellow fan  
As would melt the might of a metal man:  
Lest, little flower, you should break  
Your porcelain heart for some ruffian's sake.

## 10. THE HOUSE OF FLINT

HERE is the master mason's mark  
And here the humble craftsman's dint,  
As clean and clear and sharp as when  
They scratched them on you, house of flint !

You have no pointing to decay,  
No face of stone to waste away.  
They put you here, and here you stay,  
In the hollow below the pilgrims' way,  
Unchanged, unaltered, hard as flint.

Men do not build your like to-day,  
But a great crafty show is made,  
Though little the poor craftsman's paid.  
The joints fall out, the bricks decay,  
The bath-stone lintels waste away:

And the mark of the master-man is set  
Where the slipping slates let in the wet,  
Where the paper peels from the sweating wall,  
And patches of plaster crack and fall.

One day when labouring is fair,  
When men and things are made to wear,  
When folks would rather pay for care,  
Than spend their money in repair—

I will seek out some craftsmen rare,  
And somewhere beneath the pilgrims' way,  
Where old and branching yews grow grey,  
I will dig in the side of the old chalk down,  
And burn some lime and knap some flint.

And I'll scratch my master mason's mark  
Beside the craftsmen's cunning dint,  
On such a house as you were when  
Men dared to write their names in flint.

## 11. THE CITY DUSTHEAPS

It is bitter, bitter cold to-day,  
And the ice is out to sea;  
Therefore the seagulls are in to-day,  
And over the river grim and grey,  
And under the granite walls they play—  
Play like children and scream and fight,  
Not altogether from pure delight,  
But watching, perchance, if down the tide  
Some part of a fish that once was fried,  
Or a tasty bit from a pig's inside,  
Or, failing that, some meat or bread  
May escape from the plates of the quite well-bred  
To where, by God's grace, the poor are fed.

London is a dull grey place,  
In winter especially:  
Seldom you see a happy face  
Anywhere about the place.  
Therefore I count it a special grace,  
Something unhuman and divine  
When I get a beauty of limb or line,  
Or a wonderful colour on the town,  
As the old boiled sun is settling down  
Over outlines blurred and gritty  
Where nothing is clean, nor new, nor pretty,  
In the waste places of the city.  
And if when the seagulls wheel in the air  
Over the murky river,  
Against the head of the granite stair  
I catch a glimpse of red-gold hair,

And a grace of limb that I knew somewhere  
In a time that's not now, in a place not here.  
And if the seagulls call loud and clear,  
I may in the lift of the seagulls' cry  
Forget that nations come here to die,  
Irish and Jew and Gipsy rai,  
And think that such colour and line and limb  
Come straight through the ages dull and dim  
From off the sun's great flaming rim.  
Oh ! it's only the girls from the dustheaps  
Where it is squashy underfoot  
With cabbages, where broken shards  
Stink as they litter up the yards,  
Where old love-letters and business cards,  
And waste of morals and art and mind,  
Compete together in the wind  
To make a hell of a special kind.

They have come to forget that they are fed,  
Red hair and black, from the refuse shed  
In the splendour of throwing the sea-gulls bread.



To us she was a beautiful thing,  
Delicate, wise, and strong;  
But to him she was just everything,  
And he to her did belong.

We thought, that she should have to die  
Was cruel and wrong and bad;  
But he just took it patiently,  
For she was all that he had.

Our minds were racked to find the cause  
Why the world went so astray;  
But his was set to know the laws  
She'd want him to obey.

### 13. CONTENT

I THANK whatever God there be,  
That he has deigned to fashion me,  
That he has taken clay so strong,  
And washed so well and pugged so long,  
And burnt such cruel flames among,  
That when he strikes I ring with song.

That when he builds me in his wall  
I do not cause the work to fall,  
But bear my weight and take my place;  
And when, to give me greater grace,  
He cuts in me a cunning chase  
I do not spoil the bonded face.

If other bricks are made awry,  
Then let them in the footings lie,  
And not complain;  
For should he mould me all again,  
A thing so vile that life were pain,  
Yet would I live and bring him gain.

## 14. DISCONTENT

WHEN the dark earth after a storm of rain  
Exhales the fragrant gladness of her rest,  
The aspen leaves, freed from the strong south-  
west,  
And turning to their ancient place again,  
With whispering leaves persistently complain,  
That they have been by cruel gales oppressed.  
Though, now by balmy airs soothed and car-  
ressed,  
Ever they make their murmuring disdain.  
So life to me is nothing but a sighing,  
"Ah! love is hard! Such cruel, bitter pain!"  
E'en when I might forget, I still am fain  
To murmur on in mournful sonnet strain,  
With long-drawn cadence rising, falling, dying,  
Mocking old echoes of my passionate crying.

## 15. A CONFESSION

I USED to think when I was young,  
That many were the May-days in the spring,  
And that love of life and the life of love  
Were the very same thing.

But now that I am old and grey  
I do not care so much for May,  
And rather sickly the thoughts seem  
That made my dream.

I used to think in the beggar's bowl,  
In the tramp's long hair,  
There struggled unheeded a noble soul  
With a fate unfair.

But now that wisdom counts for much,  
And money for more,  
A little I look down upon  
The tired and poor.

And if I pity have to spare  
Which I have not often,  
I send it labelled " With great care "  
The woes to soften  
Of those who, like myself, have forced  
Their adult souls to hurry after  
Knowledge and wealth and power, and lost  
Youth and its laughter.

## 16. SIR BREUSE SANS PITIE

IN vain I looked for comforting  
To every loved and lovely thing,  
To the apple-blossom on the boughs in spring,  
To the strange wild songs that thrushes sing:  
For last year's joy in me was dead,  
And no new joy would come instead.

The apple-blossom on the boughs in spring,  
And the strange wild songs that thrushes sing,  
Were only to me an endless string  
Of colours and sounds without meaning:  
I looked in vain for pitying  
To every growing, living thing.

For everything answered : " You have no pity,  
Pity and love and sweet mercy:  
Therefore we say you can never see  
Beauty in blossom on bough and tree,  
Nor hear the things that the wild birds say,  
Though wildly they pipe to you all day.

" You have closed your eyes, that you may not see  
The sorrowful flowers that are torn from the tree,  
And the cages of birds that are not free:  
For ever you lived without pity,  
Pity and love and sweet mercy.

" So, till you learn the pitying  
Of every dying and wilted thing,  
Of the withered bloom in the frosty spring,  
Of the poor caged birds that cannot sing,  
Of the meanest, legless worms that crawl,  
Of the jellies that cannot move at all,

“ Your life shall be as a barren spring  
Wherein no wanton thrush shall sing,  
No fairies play in a mushroom ring,  
Nor apples burst into blossoming:  
You will look in vain for comforting  
To every lovely and loving thing.”



## 17. ON THE LOSS OF MY LADY'S GREAT HAIR

My lady has shorn her lovely hair,  
Ah's me !  
She tells me, that I must not care,  
Woe's me !  
That she has shorn her glossy hair,  
Her thick, dark hair.  
Ah's me !

She tells me, that true love is blind,  
And spurns the form and seeks the mind,  
But woe is me !  
She was unkind  
To cut and maim her flowing hair.

I look for it; it is not there,  
Ah's me !  
'Tis a bitter grief, and I must care,  
Woe's me !  
For I loved the length of her lovely hair,  
And I worshipped God who put it there.  
Ah's me !

But there is no worship now for me,  
I see no beauty in bird or tree ;  
For birds have feathers, and trees have leaves :  
And, ah, woe's me !  
But my sad heart grieves  
For the passionate coils of my lady's hair.

## 18. THE EPIC OF PEAT

A THOUSAND bards have sung of the harvest of  
golden grain,  
And hundreds of the harvestless sea,  
But of the peat not one.

And the man who tells the measure of what the  
season has borne,  
A couple more acres of pasture  
For an acre less of corn,

Has again and again forgotten to make his tale  
complete,  
By measuring on the bare mountain  
The acreage of the peat.

For a million years it has grown there on miles  
and miles of moor,  
Where the little people sowed it  
For the harvesting of the poor.

The crops that are of men's sowing have need  
of the sun and the rain,  
That there may be plenty at haytime,  
And a glory of golden grain.

But those that planted the bogland take no care  
for the bare hillside,  
Yet always the brown of the mountain  
Turns purple at harvest-tide.

Yet think not they willed that by mortals the  
crop should be easily earned;  
For before in the cradle they're fitted  
Three times must the peat sods be turned.

And the man that in windy April to the cutting  
will not go,  
They have sworn, that in bleak December  
He shall reap but frost and snow.

So he who is warned goes early to cut the long,  
thin vein,  
And mark on the purple pavement  
The slanting teeth of his slane.

Next, if he follows the custom, in sixes his  
turves he will stand;  
But afterwards in dozens  
On the driest spittle of land.

And last, when the summer is waning and the  
glorious autumn weather  
Has ripened the lazy barley  
And painted the crimson heather,

He will empty his brimming basket, that close  
to the cabin door,  
On high the sloping peat-stack  
May rise from the reedy floor.

## 19. TO THE CUSHENDUN CORNCRAKE

PARDON me, bird, if I did you a wrong,  
If I cursed you over loud or long !  
Pardon, if your lovely song  
Seemed to me a little long.  
In fact, if I longed to do you a wrong,  
Even perchance your neck to break  
For making such a hateful scrake,  
Saying : " Crake, crake, crake,  
Is my love awake ?"  
Till your sweet love answered you out of the  
    brake :  
" Crake, crake, crake,  
My heart is awake,  
And watches ever for my true love's sake !"

To-night you are a memory,  
A sweet voice heard across the sea,  
Calling, calling, calling me  
From wheresoever I chance to be  
To follow you over the misty sea,  
To follow, to follow, to follow and take  
The road that winds by the misty lake  
To where my true love lies awake,  
A little sad for her true love's sake,  
And a little because from out of the brake  
Your voices make  
Such a hateful crake  
That the devil himself would be kept awake.

20. TO DARWIN, HUXLEY, TYNDALL,  
RUSKIN, MORRIS, CLOUGH

ELDER men who, unafraid,  
Thought and said,  
Wrought and made  
Fabrics that can never fade,  
Fashions young  
In sunlight flung  
On a world in shade.

Masters from whom men to-day  
Turn away  
To think and say  
Words ye rejected yesterday,  
And nothing create  
New or great,  
But to the old gods pray.

Say, when to-morrow comes, shall we  
Bow the knee  
To what they see;  
Or shall we arise and fight as ye,  
The old moulds breaking  
And new moulds making  
In the smithy of the to be ?

## 21. OCTOBER

THERE'S a wonderful wind in the trees to-day,  
It makes my spirit light and gay;  
For it tells of the things that the thin clouds say  
When they go galloping together.



## 22. PEA-PICKING

IN the pine country where, by the water,  
There is a place that from villas is free,  
On the heath hillocks, close to the roadside,  
Still pitched are the grey tents of Eli Lee.

Of late this choice neighbourhood much has  
developed,  
Lost is the glory of heather and tree;  
Ten years of red-brick civilization  
Have narrowed the circle round Eli Lee.

Most of the thousands that dwell in the pine-  
lands  
Are wealthy and stodgy and nothing to me,  
But I'm friends with the son of a Jew auc-  
tioneer,  
And, perhaps, with the daughter of Eli Lee.

He is a gentleman of good education,  
And a musical taste from his Jew pedigree  
Of which he's not proud, but of his position,  
So far from the squalour of Eli Lee.

She stands aloof from the race that has con-  
quered  
The world, in her pride of a Roman rani;  
No Gorgiko blood has defiled the erati,  
Kali's the tsarvi of Eli Lee.

In the pine-country the selling of villas  
Is as paying to Jews as most business must be;  
But I fear the pea harvest that falls to her reaping  
Scarce enriches the daughter of Eli Lee.

And we of the race of world-conquering mongrels  
Bow down to the Jew whom our master we see,  
In cheaply producing that civilization  
Which purges waste products like Eli Lee.

Small matter to us that the rai we've rejected  
Has a far-away look in its eyes, that's the key  
To the things that the West has forgot of its  
childhood !  
We've no care for the wasting of Eli Lee.

So, though we grow women as fair as the morn-  
ing,  
And poets in plenty to extoll their degree,  
It seems we must kill just that type which is  
Beauty,  
And the song-soul of race of Eli Lee.

## 23. HUNGARIAN MUSIC

GIVE me one more Tásardaś,  
One more chance to wander away  
To the level lands where wandering was better  
Than in this barren wilderness to-day.

I have forgotten, Gipsy player, I have forgotten  
So many things I learnt when I was young;  
But more than all the things that I've forgotten  
Your tačo romani gillis to-day have sung.

They have told me of the far-off Eastern  
countries  
Where unstolen cherries drop from off the tree;  
And brought me to the tačo romani homeland,  
Where the tačo romani tsals lived free.

Apré o drum, apré o drum !  
'Tis a sun-loved land whence your music has  
come:  
A land which the free wind sweeps with the  
odour  
Of heather and gorse in bloom:

A great waste land with open spaces  
Where your children played, and romani graces  
Were seen in the beauty of your sweet tsais'  
faces,  
The sun-loved land whence your music has  
come.

And wisdom that not even the rai has dreamed  
of,

And knowledge that the race has never known,  
And all that might have been if only,  
For me from that land have come.

I have forgotten Gipsy player, I have forgotten  
So many things I'd try to learn again,  
If only you would give me one more T'sarda's:  
Servus, Viva, Eljen !

## 24. IN A BY-STREET AT FOGARÁŠ

INTO that silence where our brother is  
Can come no noisy music. He lies still:  
So still, that all the neighbours call him dead.  
Only his wife, fanning his white tired face,  
Thinks he may hear her voice. Unceasingly  
She cries his spirit back, bidding him remember  
How well she loved him, bidding him forget,  
That she had ever spoken one harsh word,  
Or done one thing amiss to vex his soul.

Inside the low, dark-ceilinged, hot-packed room,  
Amidst the neighbours crowded, listening,  
Watching and weeping, the house-master lies  
still.

Outside are we, his friends, his Tzigan brothers,  
Playing in sadness the soft, bitter music  
That he, a Tzigan, played when a Tzigan lay  
dead.

## 25. THE BETRAYING OF GUINEVER

AND therewithal there came an angry voice  
Above the noise of the unstilled, wandering wind,  
“Traitor knight, traitor knight, Sir Launcelot  
du Lake,

Come out of the Queen’s chamber !”

Then Sir Launcelot looked to see what armour  
hung

On the walls of that fair chamber, that withal  
Lightly he might be dressed for knightly deeds.  
But “Alas !” cried out Queen Guinever, “I  
have

None armour, though in mercy there is sore need,  
For by their noise I hear the noble knights  
Have come in a great host and surely armed.  
Wherefore I dread now is our long love ended,  
That hath endured through many a summer’s  
maying

And many a winter’s cold.” But ever in one  
Sir Mordred and Sir Agravaine cried out :

“Traitor knight, come out of the Queen’s  
chamber !”

Then shouted out Sir Launcelot, and said :

“Oh mercy ! I may not bear this shameful  
noise.”

So he took his lady, the Queen, in his arms and  
Kissed her, and said : “Most noble, Christian  
Queen,

As you have ever been my special lady,  
And I at all times been your true, poor knight,  
For whose sweet sake in many jousts and battles  
Much worship have I won, and never yet



Failed you in right or wrong, now I beseech,  
That you will pray for my soul, if here I'm  
slain."

And, as he finished, louder came the noise ;  
For the knights had got a great form from the  
hall,

And therewithal they rushed against the door.  
Then Launcelot was fain to see those men,  
And bade them leave their rushing while he  
drew

The bolt along the stancheon. So when the  
door was free,

He held it with his left hand, not too wide,  
Till anon and anon came striding in a knight,  
Sir Colerevance of Gore, and with his sword  
Struck one great blow ; but Launcelot put that by  
And gave him such a buffet on the helm,  
That grovelling dead he fell within the chamber.  
Then Launcelot shut the mightily clanging door  
Against that press of knights, and Guinever  
Came nigh to where the dead man lay, and put  
Lightly his armour upon Launcelot.

But ever Sir Mordred and Sir Agravaine,  
Above the noise of the wild wandering wind  
That made great dole about the corridor,  
Cried out : " Traitor knight, traitor knight, Sir  
Launcelot,

Come out of the Queen's chamber !" and again :  
" Fie on thee, traitor ! Maugre thy head, thou  
diest !"

But Sir Launcelot's anger swelled as a great sea :  
So, as they thrust, he let the door fall wide,  
And mightily and knightly he strode out  
Amongst them all : and none of all those knights

Could stand against the buffets that he gave.  
And so, tracing and traversing, here and there,  
He laid full fourteen knights cold to the earth,  
All but Sir Mordred, who stirred up this strife,  
Being wood mad with malice toward the Queen;  
And he was sore wounded, so he fled with dole.  
Then somewhat wearily Sir Launcelot turned  
back,  
And looked and saw, that Guinever had swooned.  
But anon it came to pass, that she might speak,  
And call unto him softly: "Marvel not,  
That I should make this fare; for wit ye well  
Now is all true love brought unto an end  
Which had a splendid springtide, ere King Mark  
Traitorously slew Tristram and Belle Isolt.  
To-night on me is the burden that she bore,  
To-night with Isolt linked we are in blame.  
'Tell Guinever,' she said, 'I send her word,  
There are four lovers only in this land—  
That is, Queen Guinever and Launcelot,  
Tristram de Liones and Queen Isolt.'  
For now a greater man than was King Mark,  
Arthur to wit, will ever be our foe,  
Who, though a noble King, is without mercy  
Where that he deems his honour is at fault:  
And cruel is the law unto true lovers,  
And by the law I must be judged to death."  
Then Launcelot cried unto her: "Guinever!"  
And again he cried: "My first love and my last,  
Come with me now, and ever will I prove  
Upon the bodies of all perilous knights  
The truth of mine own lady and her love."  
"Nay!" said Queen Guinever, and again: "Not  
so!

For thus should we break up the Table Round,  
The which fair fellowship was first ordained  
In token of the roundness of the world,  
That every worshipful knight might there  
repair

To right the evil customs of the time:  
And especially that never damosel  
By any dangerous deed should be betrayed,  
But holpen in her quest. And of them all  
Ye have the praise to be the noblest knight:  
Nor came there maid, nor damosel distressed  
To cry on Launcelot, but ye alway  
Upon you took her quarrel without stint.  
Yet wit I well no lady was beloved  
Of Launcelot, but all only Queen Guinever.  
And for the sake of that I will our love  
Shall be a token alway to true knights;  
Therefore am I so careful of this blame,  
That through us twain perished love's fellowship  
And the good customs of the Table Round."

But so she said no more; for the day brake,  
And the loud wind went before it, making dole.

## 26. THE POET CANNOT STAY IN THE SOUTH COUNTRY

I WANT to be singing of apple-trees  
That grow in a garden fair,  
And of birds that chirp in the balmy breeze  
That whispers there.

But somehow my song is away with me,  
And takes me down to the songless sea  
Where the wandering winds with a howling rout  
Roar whirling words in a wordless shout.

I want to love my sweetheart dear,  
My helpmate true,  
And do throughout the livelong year  
What we planned to do.

But somehow my heart is away with me,  
And takes me down to the shiftless sea,  
Bidding me never to rest till I find  
Some fairer love that is more to my mind.

I want to cease such imagining  
Which is utterly vain,  
And try to make a musical thing  
In a measured strain.

But somehow my soul is away from me,  
And longs to be lost in the soulless sea  
Where there is neither right nor wrong,  
But mermen's dance and mermaids' song.

## 27. QUESTION AND ANSWER

“ WHEN the winds that love her  
Turn the Spring to woo,  
What are you to me, love ?  
What am I to you ?

“ When the birds are pairing  
Merrily in the tree,  
What am I to you, love ?  
What are you to me ?

“ When the grass i' the morning  
Is kissed by the frosty dew,  
What am I to you, love ?  
What are you to me ?

“ When the waves lie quiet,  
And still is the sea,  
What am I to you, love ?  
What are you to me ?”

“ Ah ! if you would only  
Deign to tell me true  
Just that little secret,  
What I am to you,

“ Then, oh dearest lover,  
I would just make free  
To tell you very plainly  
What you are to me.”

## 28. DUNWICH

### THE CHILD.

" I CANNOT love you, sullen sea, that will not  
play,  
But blubber on the pebbly beach the whole dull  
day.  
You ought to have tremendous tides to drive  
your waves away,  
Out, out, ever so far, to the outside edge of the  
bay.  
That a child might tread, tread, tread, and  
dance  
On the red, ribbed sand;  
And wisely, wisely watch askance,  
Lest, perchance,  
Such a flat, flat fish advance  
With flapping tail, to join the dance  
On the red, ribbed sand."

### THE SEA.

" I have no time with a child to play, on the  
red, ribbed sand:  
For busily I do the will of the winds to waste  
this land.  
They bade me with my sweeping share plough  
out the unfurrowed strand  
And undermine the tumbling town, that its  
footings might not stand.  
I make it crack, crack and fall  
Into my sea.

And pride of ancient chartered wall,  
And church towers tall,  
Rich merchants' mansions, the great guildhall,  
And the craftsman's cot—'tis the same for all  
In my sullen sea."



## 29. INNISFREE

My mistress walked along the shore,  
The shore of Innisfree,  
And her voice, that is as the soft west wind,  
Kept calling, calling me.

“Come follow, come follow, come follow,” she  
said,  
“Wherever my bare brown feet can tread  
On kelp, or on rock, or in the pool in the hollow,  
There you must follow, must follow, must follow,  
If lover of mine you would be.”

But I was afraid of the angry sea  
And the white waves' fleck,  
And I feared to tread on the slippery rock  
And the red sea wrack.

“Who fears to follow, to follow,” said she,  
“I fear that never my lover shall be.”  
And she laughed at my sorrow, and scorned me  
to follow  
Where the wild spray lept from the chafing  
hollow  
And beat on her face and neck.

### 30. THE POET RECEIVETH SMALL COMFORT FROM HOLY MATRI- MONY

How sweet it is, that by one's side  
One has a wife both true and tried  
To whom with just the right confusion  
One can repeat one's last effusion !  
Say, that with burning of much oil  
In midnight lamps, from torturing toil  
And hard abstraction,  
One feels one has obtained a whole  
Not altogether perfect, still  
A product of the working will,  
The sensitive soul and some poor skill,  
A chose in action.  
And then, her mercy humbly praying,  
One dares to seek her judgment, laying  
One's soul before her eyes, resigned  
If some rare beauties faults she'll find,  
Think this line halting, that thought blind.  
Of course she's right, but never mind.  
What does she say ? Be quick ! Be kind !  
I wait. And sudden comes " Ha hah !"

Alas ! the same with my impromptu,  
A trilling, thrilling thing that haunts you:  
From tunes of birds and summer rain  
Built up and bound with pity and pain.  
I warble it in her ears. Again  
Breaks in that damning old refrain,

“ Ha hah ! Ha hah ! ”  
Perhaps it is her mind is gay,  
In merry meads her fancies play  
With elfish friends in the new-mown hay,  
Making it lighter.  
So I devise a funny jest  
From Chesterton and Shaw compressed  
With something added of the best  
In last week's comic paper.  
I smile and hand her this. Am sure  
At the sixth line she'll say “ Ha hah ! ”  
I wait. There's silence.  
Her great eyes  
Have loosed the starlight of the skies  
And dully fix them on the floor.  
I wait. At last she kind of sighs :  
“ I've told you many times before  
Your Saxon wit is just a bore :  
I'll burn it if there's one word more.”

And yet she says she'd have me write !  
Good God ! am I demented quite ?

### 31. INVOCATION TO MILTON

OH, thou whose unlighted eyes  
Looked on God in Paradise,  
Who felt on sin, at sin's beginning,  
Flame the sword, that scorched the sinning,  
In these days when Belial's strong  
Scorch us with thy flaming song !

Thee, oh fighter for decrees  
That gave the common people ease,  
Who against lords and loyalties  
Upheld the learn'd laws penalties,  
We ask who are but common men  
Uphold us with thy scholar'd pen.

Yea ! To us all whose bodies are bound  
To till with sweat another's ground,  
As a master, teach that litany,  
" Deliver us from the tyranny  
Of all false knaves that filch by stealth  
From the common men their commonwealth !"

### 32. TO MY LADY'S DELICATE EAR.

THROUGH all my heart's imagining  
I have sought for you a perfect thing.  
I have sought and thought and planned and  
    wrought,  
That you should find no word amiss  
In sense or sound or harmonies;  
But in a settled, sequent string  
These lines with melody should sing,  
And every verse should rhyme and ring  
Upon your ear, a perfect thing.

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